

November 07, 2012

Greetings Senate Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes Committee Members,

Vote **“NO”** on SB 1350.

I am an Upper Peninsula resident. I own a camp in the midst of the Ottawa National Forest. I am a hunter. I have reverence for the wolf. I have had several close encounters with wolves in the wild.

It was during deer season. The snow was falling hard covering anything in seconds. Around midnight I was leaving a friends camp which is adjacent to mine after playing cards. Armed with a flashlight I started walking through the woods that would connect to a road that leads to my cabin.

The illumination of the snow provided enough light that I did not need to turn the flashlight on. I noticed a pair of tracks in the snow walking side by side. I imagined the tracks were made by deer. I could only make out an outline.

The tracks continued along the road. Within 200 feet of the cabin I decided to turn on the light to look at the tracks. Mind you the snow was still falling rapidly to cover things within seconds. There was relatively no snow in the tracks and the recognizable print of wolf caught my eyes and a shiver went down my spine. I immediately shown the light in the direction the tracks lead. I was hoping to see shinning eyes, but no such luck.

Some might have you believe the wolf is a blood-thirsty killer. If that were the case I think I would have been toast from the incident I just described. It was not a “negative encounter”.

My latest encounter with a wolf was during work. In my line of work and for recreation I spend many hours in the woods. On one particular day at work I was battling the hazel, blackberry, raspberry brush and stumbling over fern hidden fallen trees cracking brittle dead branches. There was no attempt to be quiet.

Walking north, a short swing east, then facing south, I stopped to find a suitable area to set a tripod. Off to my right, where I had just been, there was the sound of an animal moving quickly through the woods. As I was turning to look the thought crossed my mind that it might be a fawn, but it was too late in the year for a fawn to lay motionless to avoid detection, and too much noise had been made prior to my arrival.

To my surprise, I saw a wolf just breaking into a run. Fifteen feet away the magnificent animal continued north, then shot through the brush. The running stopped so I moved in order to get another glimpse. I sensed the wolf was no more than thirty yards away, but the brush and small poplars were too thick to see clearly. The wolf moved and I saw it turn and trot off.

Now I have a personal belief why the wolf allowed me to get so close and that is not the issue here. In my opinion misunderstanding, fear and greed is why SB 1350 was introduced. Misunderstanding and fear from not having sufficient knowledge, and greed stemming from the attitude that we as humans have the right to take what we want, when we want and destroy anything that interferes with human desire.

I have witnessed what an over population of deer can do to the forest. Unchecked, young trees are whittled down, by deer, to resemble Bonsai Trees. I have seen dead deer lying on the frozen ground in the spring, starved.

Wolves can keep the deer moving, limiting the amount of over browsing in areas, and weed out the so called "inferior" of the species, creating a healthier deer herd.

Just yesterday, a friend that hunts close to where I deer hunt had pictures of deer from his game camera. Six different bucks. If the wolves were that much of a threat to the deer herd, a person might think there would be hardly any deer left in the woods, judging by the way some people talk.

I'm getting a little off track. There is a wolf management plan authorized that can be put into effect. I believe it is prudent to give the current management plan ample time to work before reducing a part of the natural cycle that keeps things in a healthy balance.

I do understand the concerns for people who have livestock that may be killed due to predators. There is compensation and there are alternatives such as dogs that live within the livestock herd. People must take some responsibility as well. There was a time when shepherds tended the livestock in the field.

People need to be responsible for their pets as well. I do not believe pets should be unattended, especially dogs. There have been many injuries and deaths from dogs. As far as I know there have been none that have occurred from wolves in the United States, yet the public seems to ignore that fact.

Finally I would like to say there is no need to fast-track SB 1350. Nature has a way of dealing with its creation.

Vote **"NO"** on SB 1350.

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